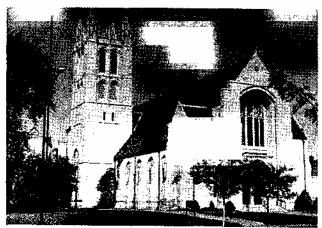
# SUMMIT AVENUE PLAN

SEPTEMBER 1986











DIVISION OF PLANNING
DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT
CITY OF SAINT PAUL
CITY HALL ANNEX
25 WEST FOURTH STREET. SAINT PAUL. MINNESOTA. 55102

# **SUMMIT AVENUE PLAN**

Adopted as part of the Saint Paul Comprehensive Plan

Planning Commission 5/23/86 City Council 9/9/86

Planning Division, Department of Planning and Economic Development

#### SUMMIT AVENUE PLAN

Adopted by Saint Paul Planning Commission 5/23/86 Adopted by Saint Paul City Council 9/9/86





#### **SUMMARY**

## **Purpose**

In the past five years, there have been a series of controversies along Summit Avenue, particularly about the use of mansions and about parking for the College of St. Thomas and William Mitchell College of Law. In March, 1985, the City Council asked the Planning Commission to establish a representative planning committee and develop a plan for Summit Avenue.

# **Major Findings**

- 1. Summit Avenue remains a city and regional treasure of history and architecture which is enjoyed daily by residents of the city's west central neighborhoods. Ernest Sandeen, former Saint Paul Heritage Preservation Commission Chairman, wrote in his book, "...Summit Avenue stands as the best-preserved American example of the Victorian monumental residential boulevard."
- 2. Summit Avenue is the strongest spoke in the parkway network and is heavily used for walking, jogging, bicycling, and

- pleasure driving. With the loss of the elm canopy, a new and more diverse parkway character is being created according to the City's Street Tree Master Plan and the landscape plan for the Summit Avenue median.
- 3. While western Summit Avenue has been predominantly a stable, high-priced single-family area, lower (or eastern) Summit has been through cycles of neighborhood change. It is currently on the upswing. Between 1974 and 1985, the percentage of properties in residential use with four or fewer housing units (conforming to RT-2 zoning) increased from 61 percent to 70 percent.
- 4. The real estate market is quite strong along most of western and central Summit Avenue. The mansions of lower Summit Avenue are part of a specialized real estate market with fewer potential buyers and longer average listing periods than the general housing market. The market appears weakest across from the College of St. Thomas.

- 5. Parking is a serious neighborhood problem around St. Thomas, William Mitchell, the University Club, and the half-dozen mansions used for reception houses and institutions.
- 6. Homeowners and potential buyers on lower Summit Avenue are apprehensive that the City will permit new commercial or institutional uses in neighboring properties. This apprehension about the future residential integrity of the neighborhood is a more serious deterrent to potential buyers than purchase prices or maintenance costs. If people are confident the City will preserve and enhance the residential character of the avenue, they will be much more likely to buy and maintain properties for their residences.

### **Major Recommendations**

- 1. The Heritage Preservation Commission should develop proposals to expand the Historic Hill District and to create a West Summit Avenue Preservation District with somewhat looser design controls. All of Summit Avenue should be protected against demolition and inappropriate new construction.
- 2. The City, through zoning policy and enforcement, should consistently protect the residential character of all of Summit Avenue. Institutions and quasi-commercial uses have, in many cases, subjected mansions to more wear and tear, created neighborhood parking and traffic problems, and inflated real estate prices, making residential development more difficult.
- 3. For bed and breakfasts and home occupations, the City can liberalize the Zoning Code without undermining the residential desirability of Summit Avenue.
- a. The current planning staff proposal to permit bed and breakfast, (which requires owner occupancy and permits one "B and B" unit in single family zones and up to

Summary 2

- five "B and B" units in multi-family zones) is acceptable if lot size requirements are increased, spacing standards between "B and B's" are added, registration with the city is required, owner occupancy is strictly defined, the number of "B and B" units in multi-family zones is lowered to four, and "B and B's" are permitted in large multi-family residences in multi-family zones.
- b. The home occupation rules in the Zoning Code, which now allow only one employee from outside the home, should be changed to allow two outside employees in very large homes (over 4,000 square feet). In any home occupation, the business use of the house is required to be secondary and incidental to the residential use.
- 4. The existing City housing inspection program should be used to ensure that housing maintenance is never neglected to the point of jeopardizing the long-run soundness of any large, old Summit Avenue house.
- 5. Although the Summit Avenue Planning Committee opposes construction of a large parking lot at William Mitchell College of Law, the Planning Commission approves the lot because the lot is a practical solution to parking problems in the area and because the City has no legal basis for denying it.
- 6. For parking at the College of St. Thomas, the Planning Commission and City Council should follow through on the process set up in the College Zoning Study whereby the college and neighborhood agree on a plan and schedule for reducing the college's parking deficit.
- 7. The Parks and Recreation Division should improve the landscaping for the Summit Avenue median, should intensify landscaping at the Short Line bridge and should support two extra trimmings for young Summit Avenue trees to be paid by assessments.

- 8. District Councils along Summit Avenue should advocate the extra tree trimmings by assessment and should speed up tree replacement by promoting the existing program for sharing tree planting costs between residents and the City.
- 9. The Public Works Department should replace the worn-out sidewalks on lower Summit Avenue with new sidewalks scored in two-foot squares to resemble the old tile sidewalks. Public Works should also remove lane striping west of Lexington (except at the stop signals) to improve bicycle safety and should support aesthetic upgrading of the Short Line bridge.
- 10. The Planning Division should establish an interdepartmental staff network to coordinate implementation of this plan. Members of the Summit Avenue Planning Committee should survey residents to explore interest in a new citizen organization for Summit Avenue. College/community relations committees for St. Thomas and Macalester College should continue to meet and a similar group should be formed for William Mitchell College of Law.

#### **CHAPTERS**

Plan Brief	1
Introduction	4
Goals	5
<b>Historic Preservation</b>	6
Housing	13
Institutions	22
Parkway	28
Organization	36
Action Plan	38
Appendices	42
APPENDICES	
Land Use Trend	42

Information on the following subjects was compiled during the writing of this plan and is available upon request from the Planning Division.

Current Land Use Restricted

Residence District Average

House Size Heating and Utility

Costs

Estimated Market Values of Summit Avenue Homes

Street Tree Planting Plan

3 Summary